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INFO RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS PRIORITY
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY 0088
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SANTO DOMINGO 000946

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/24/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PBTS](#) [DR](#) [HO](#) [RU](#) [HA](#)

SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER WARY OF ZELAYA-CHAVEZ-KIRCHNER
LINKS PRIOR TO OAS MISSION TO HONDURAS; CHARGE PRESENTS DIP
NOTE ON DR CONSULAR APPOINTMENTS

Classified By: EconPol Counselor Alexander Margulies. Reason: 1.5(b/d
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SUMMARY

1. (C) SUMMARY: Foreign Minister Carlos Morales Troncoso, who will be one of six regional foreign ministers travelling to Honduras the week of August 24 in support of the latest OAS mission, expressed his wariness of the linkages between ousted Honduran President Manuel Zelaya, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and Argentine President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner during a courtesy call by outgoing Charge, new DCM and EconPol Counselor on 8/21. Morales confided that he was hosting former Honduran President Ricardo Maduro that weekend and would see to it that Maduro briefed President Leonel Fernandez on the situation in Honduras. Morales also inquired as to the possibility of immigration/customs pre-clearance for the Dominican Republic, but accepted that cost factors made this problematic at present. Charge provided a copy of the USG diplomatic note on DR consular appointments in the U.S.; Morales sympathized, declaring his opposition to the GoDR naming U.S. legal permanent residents to consular positions, but noted that such appointments are out of his control. He said that the GoDR's relations with Russia would ramp up, with the latter opening an Embassy in Santo Domingo and daily flights commencing between the two countries. Finally, Morales emphasized that the GoDR was looking forward to hosting the next meeting of the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI) in October and voiced frustration with Haitian inaction on the Bilateral Commissions. END SUMMARY.

HONDURAS

2. (C) Outgoing Charge Bullen, incoming DCM Lambert and EconPol Counselor paid an 8/21 courtesy call on Foreign Minister Carlos Morales Troncoso and Vice Minister Juan Manuel Trullols. Morales regretted that he would not be able to attend an Embassy-hosted reception on 8/25 as he would be flying to Tegucigalpa earlier that day as one of six regional Foreign Ministers supporting OAS SecGen Insulza's latest effort to mediate the Honduran political crisis. Morales agreed with Charge and DCM that Honduras was a problem for the hemisphere that should be dealt with on the basis of the San Jose Accord process. That said, Morales stressed that the situation was largely of Zelaya's own making, albeit with the contribution of the "stupidity" of the Honduran Congress, Supreme Court and military. He confided that former Honduran President Ricardo Maduro would arrive in Santo Domingo that weekend as his personal guest, and that he had arranged for Maduro to brief President Leonel Fernandez on the developments in Honduras.

13. (C) Morales went on to express his concern over the linkages between Zelaya, Chavez and Fernandez de Kirchner. Trullols said that he had just received information that Argentine Foreign Minister Jorge Taiana, who also is one of the six foreign ministers slated to accompany Insulza, was creating complications by insisting that any meetings with the OAS delegation be held in the Argentine Embassy in Tegucigalpa even though the de facto Honduran regime had ordered Argentina's diplomats there to leave after the GOA had expelled its diplomats from Buenos Aires. Trullols opined that Fernandez de Kirchner was acting in coordination with Chavez to torpedo the latest mission, while Morales limited himself to the observation that one never knew where the Argentines stood from day-to-day.

PRE-CLEARANCE INQUIRY

14. (C) Morales asked about the possibility of extending immigration/customs pre-clearance procedures to the DR. Charge replied that this was an issue for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), adding that the cost of stationing the large number of officers and support staff would be an obstacle. DCM agreed, stating that he addressed this issue with DHS during his consultations in Washington. DCM explained that on average it costs the USD 400,000 per year to deploy an employee overseas and a pre-clearance program for the DR would likely be larger than that for Bermuda, where some 60-70 USG officials are stationed. Morales then asked whether it would be possible for the host country to share some of the costs? DCM said that we would look into

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this.

USG DIPLOMATIC NOTE

15. (C) Charge handed Morales the USG's diplomatic note on the assignment of, and standards applicable to, personnel at consular posts in the U.S. (delivered by WHA/CAR to Dominican Ambassador Robert Saladin earlier that day). Morales perused the note and voiced his approval of the USG's position that U.S. legal permanent residents will not be accredited as consular officers of a foreign state. He complained that he has consistently opposed such nominations by the GoDR, but that these matters are not within his control.

ENHANCED TIES WITH RUSSIA

16. (C) Morales said that he expected his upcoming trip to Russia will result in the latter opening an Embassy and stationing an Ambassador in Santo Domingo (currently Russia's Ambassador in Caracas is accredited here), increased investment and an uptick in flights from thrice weekly to daily. He mused that this could result in further Russian mafia penetration of the DR, recalling an incident some years ago in which three Russians were murdered at a vacation estate owned by a purported Russian mafia figure (the estate has since been turned into a school).

CARIBBEAN BASIN SECURITY INITIATIVE

17. (C) Charge thanked Morales for the GoDR's offer to host the next meeting of the CBSI in October. The Foreign Minister replied that he had been impressed by the report of the previous meeting and provided assurances that the GoDR would participate actively in this program.

HAITIAN INACTION

¶8. (C) Morales vented his frustration with the Haitian Government's "lack of response" to GoDR offers to move forward on the Bilateral Commission, noting that the GOH cancelled scheduled talks in March and then pulled out of a subsequent meeting set for Trinidad and Tobago. Trullols added that the Dominican Government's fourteen working groups are ready to address their respective issues with Haitian counterparts, but that the latter appear not to have done anything.

¶9. (C) Charge and DCM pointed out that there was high-level interest in Washington in Haiti, particularly in initiatives and investments that could benefit both nations on Hispaniola. Morales replied that he was aware of this, noting that he discussed these issues with Secstate during her visit, including the proposal to build twin plants on the border and the GoDR's readiness to work with Haiti on promoting tourism there. The Foreign Minister added that he thought Haiti has a great deal of potential and had a "good man" at the helm in President Preval, but said it was very frustrating to see the Haitian Government fail to take advantage of the current "window of opportunity."

COMMENT

¶10. (C) The Foreign Minister provided a fond farewell to the outgoing Charge and a warm welcome to the new DCM. With respect to the OAS mission to Honduras, we expect Morales will be a team-player on the Insulza delegation, whatever his personal views on Zelaya and Zelaya's ties to Chavez. END COMMENT.
BULLEN